

FILE 01

CONTRA AID CHALLENGED IN LAWSUIT
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WASHINGTON

A federal lawsuit is contesting President Reagan's \$100 million aid package for Nicaraguan rebels by seeking enforcement of the World Court ruling against U.S. support for the Contras.

The World Federalist Association, a Washington-based group that advocates compliance with international law, filed the suit Tuesday in U.S. District Court here. The suit contends that the U.S. government is bound by the United Nations Charter to comply with World Court rulings.

On June 27, the court, based in The Hague, Netherlands, branded U.S. support for the Contras a violation of international law and ordered the aid stopped. But at Reagan's urging, the House and Senate approved \$100 million for the Contras, a package still awaiting final congressional action.

Also on Tuesday, Reagan stepped up pressure for final approval, charging that Contra aid opponents have "deliberately stalled" the bill and that "freedom fighters will pay with their lives for this politics of obstructionism." The aid package, including \$70 million for weapons and ammunition, is contained in a military spending bill that is unlikely to pass before Congress adjourns early next month. The Contra aid is expected to go into a catch-all spending bill to keep the government running after the current fiscal year expires Sept. 30.

The federal suit, however, seeks a federal court injunction to block the aid.

"At issue is whether the United States, as a law-abiding nation, will obey the decision of the highest international court in existence," said Walter Hoffmann, World Federalist Association spokesman, in announcing the suit.

"If the U.S. government is permitted to disregard the World Court ruling, our country will be following the example of Iran, Libya and those in the Soviet bloc which either have refused to accept World Court jurisdiction or have ignored its decisions." Attorney Jules Lobel conceded that the suit lacked legal precedent and "like all precedent-setting suits, it's a tough row to hoe." But Lobel argued that Article 6 of the U.S. Constitution requires compliance with ratified treaties and thus obligates Reagan to abide by the U.N. Charter and the decision of the U.N.'s judicial arm, the World Court, formally known as the International Court of Justice.

Federal courts have traditionally granted the president wide latitude in the conduct of foreign policy, although U.S. courts have been used for collecting damages assessed by the World Court.

The administration had no immediate comment on the suit, but has contended in the past that the World Court was an inappropriate forum for settling the Nicaraguan conflict.

The Contras, based mostly in Honduras, have been fighting since 1981 to overthrow Nicaragua's leftist government. Until 1984, they received covert support from the CIA.

Defendants named in the suit are Reagan, CIA Director William J. Casey, Secretary of State George P. Shultz and Defense Secretary Caspar W. Weinberger.

Plaintiffs include Americans living in Nicaragua, who contend that renewed U.S. aid to the Contras jeopardizes their safety, and U.S. groups that have sponsored development and relief projects in Nicaragua. Among the Americans is Sandra Price, a Roman Catholic nun living in the remote town of Siuna who says she was threatened and detained by the Contras.